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HOMEMAKERS' OPINIONS AND PREFERENCES FOR

BROILER-FRYERS AND TURKEYS

A Preliminary Report

U. S. Department of Agriculture
Statistical Reporting Service

May 1965

Preface

This report is concerned with homemakers' opinions, preferences and uses of poultry and selected poultry products. It is one of a group of studies being conducted by the Special Surveys Branch, Statistical Reporting Service, to determine consumer reactions to agricultural products. The study was designed to aid the poultry industries in efforts to improve their market position and to provide consumers with an opportunity to express their opinions about poultry products.

The Statistical Reporting Service assumed major responsibility, with cooperation and advice from other services in the Department, and from the National Broiler Council. Representatives of the National Turkey Federation, Poultry and Egg National Board, National Association of Food Chains, Arkansas Valley Industries, Gainesville Poultry Company, Gold Kist Poultry Growers, Holly Farms Poultry Industries, Jewel Tea Company, J. D. Jewell, Inc., J. McKenny Willis and Sons, Mountaire Poultry Company, Pillsbury Company, Quaker Oats Company, and Sanderson Farms, Inc. participated in the planning stages.

The study was under the general direction of Trienah Meyers and Margaret Weidenhamer. Betty Burnside was study director during the early phases of the study. The data were collected by Opinion Research Corporation of Princeton, N. J., under contract with the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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HOMEMAKERS' OPINIONS AND PREFERENCES FOR
BROILER-FRYERS AND TURKEYS

A Preliminary Report

By John L. McCoy, Study Director
Statistical Reporting Service

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade there has been a simultaneous trend of increase in per capita consumption of both broilers and turkeys, and a decrease in the price received by producers. This study was designed to provide data on some of the factors influencing the demand for poultry. It contains up-to-date information on consumers' opinions, wants, and criticisms, and can be used in planning efforts for maintaining or improving market positions.

During the months of July through September, 1964, personal interviews were conducted with a probability sample of 2,663 homemakers concerning their use of and attitudes toward poultry and selected poultry products. The sample population represented a cross-section of private households in both rural and urban areas throughout the United States, excluding Alaska and Hawaii, and was confined to households in which meals were served. Respondents were selected entirely by area probability sampling procedures.

This preliminary report is limited to an overview of some of the major findings and is not intended to be exhaustive. It is being released before final review and analysis; therefore, the data are subject to possible minor changes. A complete final report, containing detailed information on all subjects included in the questionnaire, is being prepared for publication.

Some of the data herein presented are the result of questions replicated from an earlier national poultry study conducted by the Department in 1956. ^{1/} Data from both studies are presented for purposes of trend comparisons of consumer usage and attitudes. In certain instances selected comparisons are presented by region, community size, and family income. The same regional and community size classifications were used in both surveys. The regional classification corresponds to that of the Bureau of the Census with the exception that Maryland, Delaware, and the District of Columbia were grouped with the North rather than the South. For the classification by community size, metropolitan areas were defined as those of more than 1 million population and their suburbs. Urban areas included cities of less

^{1/} Weidenhamer, Margaret. Consumer Preferences, Usages and Buying Practices for Poultry and Selected Poultry Products. U. S. Dept. Agr., Mktg. Res. Rpt. 252. June 1958.

than 1 million together with their suburbs and towns down to 2,500 population. Rural included towns of less than 2,500 population and the open country farm and nonfarm population. The classification for family income used in the current study was adjusted to compensate for the increase in total family earnings since 1956.

<u>Classification</u>	<u>Income Group</u>	
	<u>1956</u>	<u>1964</u>
Lower	Under \$3,000	Under \$4,000
Middle	\$3,000-4,999	\$4,000-6,999
Upper	\$5,000 and over	\$7,000 and over

BROILER-FRYERS

Of the poultry products surveyed, broiler-fryers were served by the largest proportion of homemakers. Ninety-seven percent of all homemakers interviewed in 1964 had served broilers or fryers during the year prior to the interview. A comparison with 1956 survey data indicates a national increase of about 4 percent. As table 1 (p.11) indicates, the Northeast showed the greatest percentage increase since 1956 in the proportion of homemakers reporting the usage of broilers or fryers (from 88 percent to 95 percent).

A majority of broiler-fryer users reported serving them frequently. Sixty-four percent of the users in 1964 as compared with 50 percent in 1956 reported serving broiler-fryers once a week or more often--an increase of 14 percent. The greatest increase in the number of homemakers reporting frequent servings occurred in the Northeast and the West (table 2).

One of the more important factors among those studied was family size. Larger families tended to use broiler-fryers more often.

Replies to the question: "In the past 12 months, how often have you served broilers or fryers on the average - about how many times a week or month?" (Percentages only for homemakers who had served broiler-fryers)

<u>Reply</u>	<u>Number in family</u>		
	<u>1 or 2</u>	<u>3 or 4</u>	<u>5 or more</u>
	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>
More than once a week-----	19	23	33
Once a week-----	35	43	40
Two - 3 times a month-----	28	24	18
Once a month or less-----	15	8	8
Not ascertained-----	3	2	1
Total-----	100	100	100
Number of homemakers-----	945	938	703

Among homemakers who reported serving broiler-fryers more than once a week, education and income also showed important differences. Homemakers with only grammar school education and those from lower income families showed a greater tendency than did others to report serving broiler-fryers more often.

Estimates of Family Serving Limits

As a means of estimating attitudes toward frequency-of-serving limits for chicken, each homemaker was asked to indicate which of a series of meat items she thought she could serve as often as 3 times a week, twice, or only once a week without her family growing tired and showing dissatisfaction. Three-quarters of all homemakers selected beef as an item their families would not tire of if served as often as 3 times a week (fig. 1). Chicken was selected by 3 homemakers in 10 as an item they could serve their families this often. Only about 1 homemaker in 10 selected pork or frankfurters, while turkey and lamb were each mentioned by only 4 percent of the homemakers.

When all three serving frequencies are summed, beef is indicated as the least tiresome, followed closely by chicken. Turkey or lamb appear to be the most tiresome of the items surveyed.

Among respondents selecting items at the frequency of 3 times a week, beef was chosen by almost 9 in 10 homemakers from the West. In contrast, about 6 in 10 from the South selected beef. However, a reverse trend

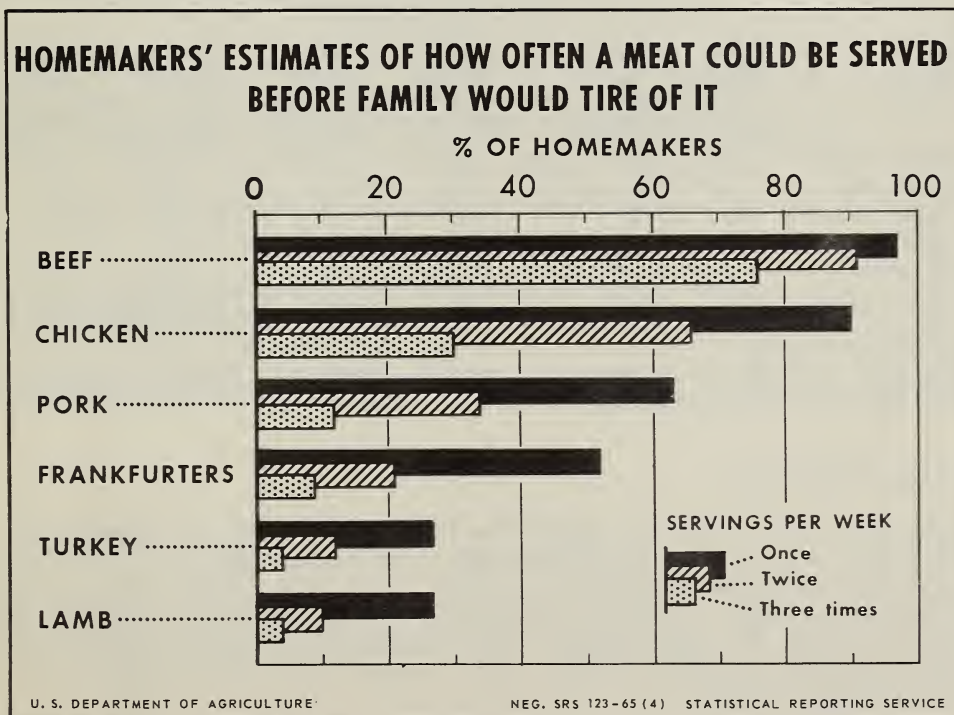


Figure 1

occurred for chicken; the South contained the larger proportion of homemakers, about 4 in 10, and the West contained the smaller proportion, only about 2 homemakers in 10, who thought they could serve it this often.

Beef was chosen by roughly 85 percent of the homemakers having higher income or college education as compared with about 60 percent of those with grammar school education and those from lower income families. Chicken was chosen by about 40 percent of the lower income homemakers as compared with about 20 percent of those in the upper income group.

In conjunction with homemakers' estimates of family consumption "fatigue," respondents were also asked to indicate if individual family members, including themselves, "would like to have broilers or fryers served more often, less often, or about the same as now." A majority of family members in all sex-age groups were reported wanting them served at the current rate. However, some interesting differences emerged--for example, the younger age groups and particularly pre-teens were reported in favor of having them served more often than what homemakers reported for adults (including themselves). Adult men were reported wanting broiler-fryers served less often than the homemakers reported for themselves.

Replies to the question: "Would (you yourself) (other family member) like to have broilers or fryers more often, less often, or about the same as now? (Asked only of users)

<u>Reply</u>	<u>Age group</u>					
	<u>Home-</u>	<u>Adult</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
	<u>maker</u>	<u>men</u>	<u>13-19</u>	<u>13-19</u>	<u>3-12</u>	<u>3-12</u>
	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>
More often -----	16	15	31	28	37	33
Less often -----	3	11	9	7	6	4
About same -----	79	70	57	63	54	59
Don't eat -----	*	2	2	*	1	*
Don't know -----	2	2	1	2	2	4
Total -----	100	100	100	100	100	100

Number of family						
members ---	2,570	2,330	610	528	1,099	1,122

*Denotes less than 1 percent.

Purchasing Preferences

Homemakers were asked to report the forms of broilers or fryers they purchased most often. The proportion reporting the purchase of "the whole bird, cut up" decreased by about 20 percent since 1956, while the proportion reporting the purchase of certain selected parts or the whole bird not cut-up increased by about the same amount. Most homemakers reported being able to purchase a broiler or fryer in the weight range which suited their own particular family needs.

To investigate consumer attitudes regarding certain pricing and marketing practices, purchasers were also asked to indicate the relative importance of each of the following factors when buying broiler-fryers: (a) total weight vs. number of packaged parts (asked only of those who bought parts), (b) price per pound vs. total price, and (c) the best buy, that is certain parts or the whole bird.

Among those who reported purchasing parts, about 60 percent said the number of parts was more important than the total weight. Results were a little less conclusive concerning the relative importance of price per pound and total price--45 percent voted for "price per pound," while 36 percent mentioned "total price." However they were more emphatic about the best buy for their money--almost 70 percent mentioned the whole bird rather than just certain parts.

Quality Evaluation

Purchasers were further asked to choose from a list of preselected items the characteristics which they felt were the most important in selecting broilers or fryers. A majority, about 7 in 10, mentioned "one that is well cleaned," "no bruises or discoloration," and "the right size." About 6 in 10 selected "inspected by the government," and a little over 5 in 10 mentioned "no pinfeathers" and "plumpness." About 4 in 10 said they "depend on the store," while only 2 in 10 mentioned "the brand name." Two other factors of apparently little consequence in consumer decisions are "soft moist skin" selected by 2 in 10, and "flexible breastbone" mentioned by about 1 in 10.

Judging from the above findings, government inspection is a relatively important quality indicator for many consumers. Related to this is the problem of communicating Department of Agriculture quality grades to the consumer. When asked which of 3 poultry grade labels would be the easiest to understand--letters, A-B-C; words, GOOD, CHOICE, COMMERCIAL; or numbers, 1-2-3; almost 6 homemakers in 10 voted for words, while 3 in 10 selected letters. Only 5 percent felt that numbers would be easier to understand. Although there was a plurality for words among all groups, homemakers with higher education and who were in families with higher incomes showed a greater tendency to select "words" than did others. Homemakers with only grammar school education or who were from lower income families were proportionately more represented among those who expressed no opinion--a finding which is in general agreement with most studies in survey research.

Replies to the question: "As you probably know, some poultry is graded by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Which of these ways of showing grades do you think would be the easiest to understand--the letters, the words, or the numbers?" (Asked only of purchasers)

<u>Grading classification</u>	<u>United States total</u>	<u>Education of homemaker</u>			<u>Family income</u>		
		<u>None or grammar</u>	<u>High school</u>	<u>College</u>	<u>Lower</u>	<u>Middle</u>	<u>Upper</u>
	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>
Words: (Choice, Good, Commercial) --	56	41	60	64	46	57	64
Letters: (A-B-C) ---	30	33	30	25	33	31	26
Numbers: (1-2-3) ---	5	6	5	6	6	5	5
No opinion -----	9	20	5	5	15	7	5
Number of homemakers -----	2,538	552	1,515	456	681	914	882

Methods and Habits of Preparation

All users of broilers or fryers were asked to indicate which of several cooking methods they had used in the year preceding the interview. "Fried" was the method most often reported by respondents--87 percent. However, compared with the relative increase reported for other methods of preparation, its popularity appears to have decreased somewhat since 1956.

Percent serving broiler-fryers:

<u>1956</u>	<u>1964</u>	
94	87	Fried
41	65	Baked or roasted
26	43	Broiled
17	47	Barbecued
11	2	Other ways

The proportion of families cooking broilers or fryers outdoors increased considerably since 1956. Thirty-five percent of all users reported cooking broiler-fryers outdoors which is a sizable increase over the 11 percent who reported doing so in 1956. Rural and lower income homemakers were generally less likely than others to report outside cooking of broiler-fryers.

Trial of new recipes and methods of preparation was seldom reported by homemakers. About three-fourths reported not trying a new method or recipe within the year. Among the minority of "innovators" a larger proportion were represented among college educated and upper income groups. Personal influence appears to play a major role as an information source for new recipes. For example, the most often reported single source of information was a relative or friend (28 percent); the next most important source was the actual experience of being served the new recipe (17 percent). Miscellaneous printed media sources such as magazines, cookbooks, and food packages were also frequently mentioned.

TURKEYS

Seventy-six percent of the respondents reported serving turkey during the year prior to interviewing which is an increase of 11 percent in reported usage since 1956 (table 1). However, turkey is still served rather infrequently. In both surveys about the same proportion of users (3 out of 4) reported a rate of serving of only 1 to 3 times during the year (table 2).

When asked to explain why they served turkey, 8 users in 10 mentioned reasons related to special occasions such as "traditional for Christmas and Thanksgiving." Another important factor was turkey size, mentioned by 3 in 10, which respondents associated with the feeding of large groups of people, or mentioned in connection with leftovers for later meals or snacks. Size was also considered by some respondents as a great limiting factor, and was given as a major reason for not serving by about 4 non-users in 10.

Major factors associated with non-use are:

- Lower income
- Grammar school education
- Ages under 30 and over 60
- Small family size

With the exception of family size, these factors were also related to how often turkey was served among those who used it. Larger families served turkey about as infrequently as smaller ones. For example, families of 5 or more members reported serving turkey about the same number of times as families of only 1 or 2 members.

Fresh and Frozen Turkey

A slightly larger proportion of homemakers reported using frozen turkey rather than fresh; however, what respondents considered as fresh may actually have been frozen which was sold in thawed form. According to homemakers' reports, there is an impressive trend toward increasing use of frozen turkey as the table below indicates.

	<u>Used</u>		<u>Prefer</u>	
	<u>1956</u>	<u>1964</u>	<u>1956</u>	<u>1964</u>
	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Fresh turkeys -----	52	41	60	60
Frozen turkeys -----	26	47	13	19
Both -----	17	9	---	---
No preference -----	---	---	24	20
Other answers or can't recall -----	5	3	3	---

The margin of preference, however, is substantially in favor of fresh, as was reported in 1956, and suggests that actual availability of the 2 forms may influence purchasing decisions. For example, 47 percent of those who usually purchase frozen reported that fresh was not available while only 7 percent of those who usually purchase fresh reported that frozen was not available.

Major factors associated with the purchase of frozen were:

- Rural living
- Higher income
- Younger age
- High school or college education

Preferences for Hens and Toms

Hens were used and preferred by a larger proportion of homemakers than were toms. Some of the major reasons given for preferring either toms or hens suggest 2 different types of markets. Hens, for example, were preferred for their smaller size, tenderness, and flavor, while toms were preferred because of their larger size and lower price.

	<u>Used</u>	<u>Prefer</u>
	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Hens -----	51	55
Toms -----	22	18
Both or no preference -----	11	15
Not ascertained -----	15	11

Homemakers in smaller families showed a slightly greater preference for hens, while those in larger families tended to prefer toms.

Table 1.--Use of broiler-fryers and turkeys, 1956 and 1964

Item	United States		North-east		North Central		South		West	
	1956	1964	1956	1964	1956	1964	1956	1964	1956	1964
	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.
Homemakers who had served:										
Broiler-fryers --	93	97	88	95	93	98	98	98	93	97
Turkeys -----	65	76	75	80	64	76	51	68	73	83
Number of home-makers -----	3,134	2,663	836	746	814	770	771	731	713	416

Table 2.--Frequency of serving broiler-fryers or turkeys among users of each, 1956 and 1964

Frequency of serving	United States		North-east		North Central		South		West	
	1956	1964	1956	1964	1956	1964	1956	1964	1956	1964
	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.
Broiler-Fryers:										
Once a week or more -----	50	64	46	66	47	58	65	74	36	53
2-3 times a month	26	23	29	23	27	29	18	16	30	27
Once a month-----	11	7	12	5	12	6	9	5	16	14
Less than once a month -----	11	4	11	4	12	5	7	3	15	4
Not ascertained--	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	3	2
Number of homemakers -----	2,913	2,586	736	708	756	755	755	718	666	405
	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.
Turkeys:										
6 times a year or more -----	7	12	11	17	6	10	5	8	6	11
4 or 5 times a year -----	13	12	19	14	9	13	7	10	10	13
1-3 times a year -----	76	74	67	68	81	76	84	78	79	73
Not ascertained--	4	2	3	1	4	1	4	4	5	3
Number of homemakers -----	2,066	2,022	630	599	517	584	395	497	524	342

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